

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Balanced Budget Act (BBA) of 1997 establishes a new Medicare+Choice program under part C of title XVIII of the Social Security Act (the Act). Under this program, an eligible individual may elect to receive Medicare benefits through enrollment in a Medicare+Choice plan that has a contract with us, which may include a health plan offered by a provider-sponsored organization. The BBA establishes a definition of PSOs that will be further clarified in forthcoming regulations. Section 4001 of the BBA mandates an expedited and modified negotiated rulemaking process for establishing solvency standards for PSOs. The standards must be published as an interim final rule, subject to comment, by April 1, 1998.

Under the BBA, the Negotiated Rulemaking Committee is required to report to the Secretary by January 1, 1998, regarding its progress and whether it is likely to achieve consensus. The Committee is required to report its proposed standards to the Secretary by March 1, 1998. If, however, the Committee reports on January 1st that it has failed to make significant progress or that consensus is unlikely within the assigned time frame, the Committee will be terminated and publication of a rule will proceed using other rulemaking procedures.

The Committee held its first meetings on October 20, 21, and 22, 1997. At these meetings, presentations were made that related to health plan solvency, and the Committee discussed how to address the principal issues and how to proceed in developing solvency standards.

The announced future meetings are open to the public without advance registration. Public attendance at the meetings may be limited to space available. A summary of all proceedings will be available for inspection in room 309-G of the Department's offices at 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC, on Monday through Friday of each week from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Phone: (202) 690-7890), or can be accessed through the HCFA Internet site at <http://www/hcfa.gov/medicare/mgdcar1.htm>. Additional information related to the Committee will be available on the web site.

(Section 1851 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w-21 and section 10(a) of Public Law 92-463 (5 U.S.C. App. 2, section 10(a)); 45 C.F.R. Part 11)

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program No. 93.773, Medicare—Hospital Insurance; and Program No. 93.774, Medicare—Supplementary Medical Insurance Program)

Dated: October 24, 1997.

Nancy-Ann Min DeParle,
Deputy Administrator, Health Care Financing Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

RIN 1018-AE00

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Extension of Comment Period on Proposed Rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Grizzly Bear Recovery in the Bitterroot Ecosystem

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule; extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: The Fish and Wildlife Service provides notice that the comment period is being extended on the proposed rule to establish a nonessential experimental population of grizzly bears in the Bitterroot Ecosystem. All interested parties that have not done so are invited to submit comments on this proposal.

DATES: Comments will be accepted until December 1, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and materials should be addressed to Dr. Christopher Servheen, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Project Leader, Bitterroot Grizzly Bear EIS, P.O. Box 5127, Missoula, Montana 59806.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Christopher Servheen, Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator (see ADDRESSES above), at telephone (406) 243-4903.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes to reintroduce the grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), a threatened species, into east-central Idaho and a portion of western Montana. On July 2, 1997, the Service published a proposed rule (62 FR 35762) to establish a nonessential experimental population pursuant to section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Grizzly bear populations have been extirpated from most of the lower 48 United States. They presently occur in populations in the Cabinet/Yaak ecosystem in northwestern Montana and north Idaho, the Selkirk ecosystem in north Idaho and northeastern Washington, the North

Cascades ecosystem in northwestern Washington, the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem in Montana, and the Yellowstone ecosystem in Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho. The purpose of this reintroduction is to reestablish a viable grizzly bear population in the Bitterroot ecosystem in east-central Idaho and adjacent areas of Montana, one of six grizzly recovery areas identified in the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan. Potential effects of this proposed rule are evaluated in a draft Environmental Impact Statement released concurrently with the publication of the proposed rule. This grizzly bear reintroduction does not conflict with existing or anticipated Federal agency actions or traditional public uses of wilderness areas or surrounding lands.

Public Comments Solicited

The comment period on this proposal is scheduled to close on November 1, 1997. To accommodate verbal requests and because of the extensive interest in the proposal, the Service extends the comment period. Written comments may now be submitted until December 1, 1997, to the Service office identified in the ADDRESSES section above. All comments must be received before the close of the comment period to be considered.

Author

The author of this notice is Olin Bray, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 25486, DFC, Denver, CO 80225-0486; telephone (303) 236-7400, extension 249.

Authority

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: October 22, 1997.

Ralph O. Morgenweck,
Regional Director, Denver, Colorado.

[FR Doc. 97-28481 Filed 10-27-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 600

[Docket No. 970829214-7214-01; I.D. 082097B]

RIN 0648-AJ76

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Observer Health and Safety

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and